6229

A

SHORT ALARM

BEFORE THE

FAST

In 1782.

And to be ſeriouſly conſidered AFTER.

BY A

FRIEND TO HIS COUNTRY.

LONDON:

Printed for C. DILLY, in the POULTRY.

M MCC LXXXII.

PRICE ONE SHILLING.

BRITISH MUSEUM

A

SHORT ALARM, &c.

IN the public proclamations of every State, the underſtandings of the people are addreſſed in wiſdom, or inſulted by authority. It is therefore in itſelf an unalienable right of human nature, and in this country agreeable to the ſpirit of the conſtitution, for the people to conſider for themſelves, and judge according to evidence. For in the blindneſs of the mind there can be no obedience of the underſtanding, and all beſide is folly and confuſion!

If in matters merely of a *civil* nature this be true, how much more ſtrikingly ſo with regard to a proclamation for a na-

tional Faſt! Such an appointment brings into the queſtion more than the propriety of concurrence with the government of men: It preſcribes the manner and the purpoſe of our approach before GOD! A ſubject of all others the moſt ſolemn, and therefore to be weighed with a proportionate attention.

Moſt gladly could I be aſſured that I cannot addreſs an individual of my countrymen, who queſtions the ſupremacy of religious obedience and the prior obligations of the Chriſtian religion. Then might I hope to ſtand before him with this addreſs, on the moſt happy and ſacred ground, and be heard with that candour and complacence which are due to a well-meaning individual in a moment of national calamity!

I am, however, well apprized, that I have to addreſs men of various civil and religious opinions, and that my ſentiments of both kinds muſt depend for admiſſion

admiſſion on their clearneſs, and their agreement with obvious and acknowledged truths.

The occaſion of the approaching general Faſt, is the national calamity of war; and the object of it is to obtain, by general humiliation and prayer, that concluſion of the war, which government has preſumed to think a right one.

Now with reſpect to the national calamity in queſtion, this country is agreed; every man ſees it, and thouſands and tens of thouſands are lamenting its exiſtence! All but a few intereſted men muſt be wiſhing its concluſion!—But by what means the bleſſing of peace and tranquility is to be reſtored, is the grand queſtion which agitates, in a diſtreſsful ſilence, the minds of my countrymen. Opportunities of being at peace, which once offered and courted attention, are now no more, according to the common eſtimate of men and things.

In

In ſuch a ſtate of dreadful uncertainty, ſome alleviation may indeed be drawn from *hope*, that a war which ſome time or other muſt have an end may be terminated by providential means, in mercy to the innocent and ſuffering of various claſſes. But before any man can be right in approaching the throne of mercy for interpoſition in favour of this war, he ought to be fully perſuaded that it is right in itſelf, and that it has been thus far purſued from virtuous motives.

To diſcuſs here at large the great queſtion of conſtitutional right, which hath already employed ſo much wiſdom and eloquence in vain, might perhaps be impertinent. Yet is this a time, if ever there was one, for a ſerious retroſpect of things, that no man may enter into political prayers, as a matter of courſe, without adverting to the cauſe and the progreſs of calamity; for on the ſincerity of his heart, eſtabliſhed on the rectitude of his views, much muſt depend.

In

In the commencement of the preſent diſputes with the colonies, the caſe in many of its various circumſtances was new in hiſtory. The revolt of colonies, merely, was not new; hiſtory, both antient and modern, had furniſhed inſtances of revolt.

But that colonies ſo young, and yet ſo ſtrong, ſo extenſive and formidable; at ſuch a diſtance from the ſeat of Government,—yet the ſame in language, religion, and manners, and connected by the ſtrong ties of conſanguinity and commerce, ſhould deliberately riſe up to make a diviſion of the empire — were, together, circumſtances not only *new*, but which excited the general attention of all nations.

Yet in ſuch an undertaking, could not thoſe colonies be without motives of glory as well as of ſuppoſed intereſt. — They knew that in proportion as revolters had been ſucceſsful in their attempts to ſhake off the yoke of ſlavery, whether real or imaginary,

imaginary, they had been diſtinguiſhed as *brave*, and their names been rendered *illuſtrious*.

But *ſlavery* was what the main body of the Engliſh people could not conſider as the proper plea of America.—Full of the idea of her own freedom, as ſuperior to that of any other country, it was no wonder that the colonies, her "children," ſhould be conſidered as free, under the ſame government; in other words, that the meaſures of this government had no eventual tendency to infringe on the proper freedom of the colonies. Or if they had any ſuch poſſible tendency, it was ſtill proper in itſelf that a part of the *burthen*, as well as the *title* of freedom, ſhould be borne by them, as "children," and not that the parent ſhould be overburthened with the *price* of the general freedom!

Such, in effect, was the language of the people of this nation.—America happened to think differently.

She

She conſidered herſelf as the offspring, the caſual offspring of many countries; grown by her own united induſtry into reſpectability among the nations of the world; poſſeſſing various natural and improved advantages, for a large and extenſive commerce; on which the reſtrictions of the mother country were a grievance incompatible with her growing intereſt, and that freedom which every man has a natural right to, in improving the advantages of his own labour and ingenuity.

She conſidered, that if in her infancy ſhe had received ſome advantages of ſupply from the parent ſtate, and had been under the ſuppoſed protection of her arms; yet that ſuch obligations had been more than balanced by her own actual ſervices againſt the enemies of this country, and the large returns of her long reſtricted commerce.

She declared herſelf ſenſible of commercial advantage and happineſs, to be de-

rived from, as well as to be imparted by, an intercourſe and alliance with this country; and in ſuch profeſſions it is impoſſible but that ſhe muſt have been ſincere; but her idea of *freedom*, as ſtanding oppoſed to a ſyſtem of taxation at the pleaſure of the Britiſh Parliament, roſe ſuperior to every other conſideration.

As to the idea of her being *naturally* dependant, on the principle of *parent* and *child*, ſhe could ſee no argument in it from juſt analogy: For as every child, when grown to maturity, becomes a ſeparate citizen of the world, and ſucceeds to the privileges of an independent member of the community—and is more eminently intitled to a diſtinction of independence, if his natural parent has been over rewarded by his labours for all the care and expence attending his infancy; ſo *ſhe* having grown up into a capacity of independence, poſſeſſing immenſe fields of her own cultivation, at the diſtance of ſeveral thouſand miles from us; ſecured

by

by the natural barrier of the wide ocean; poſſeſſing alſo uncommon means within herſelf for a happy independence; and having abundantly diſcharged every debt of gratitude which a good "parent" could require, believed and deliberately declared, that ſhe "ought to be free."

And believing that her ſtrength and reſources were equal to the conflict, ſhe determined to hazard a defenſive war. Whether her arguments, and final determination, are juſtifiable in the abſtract nature of government and ſubordination, is not the moſt proper queſtion for this country to conſider; but rather whether the bulk of the people of England, in ſimilar circumſtances, would not have had ſimilar ſentiments: And if ſo, whether their boaſted courage, and paſſion for liberty, would not have led them with equal avidity to the ſame reſiſtance?

The reſiſtance of America was no unnatural event.—It was an event long ex-

pected by intelligent men, not only from prior inſtances of American conduct, and the general ſpirit of her moſt opulent and able citizens, but from the very nature of her circumſtances, and the examples of preceding times.

Such diſcerning men were prepared to adviſe the moſt mild and conciliatory meaſures; to give up the very idea of American dependence on this country; but to court her affection, her alliance, her commerce, on the moſt liberal ground.—And ſurely on ſuch a ground only were thoſe advantages to have been deſired by every wiſe and good man. On this ground only ſtands that amiable intercourſe of one country with another, which is the ornament of civil ſociety.

But DOMINION was the idol ſet up in that day; and at all events muſt the proud arch of this empire be reared above all her neighbours! Ambition began at the head, and ſpread through all the ranks of the people;

people;—and it was in vain for thoſe to contend, who, preſerving the calmneſs of their reaſon, not only believed they ſaw injuſtice, but foreſaw the natural chain of difficulties, tending to the verge of ruin.

It was in vain that men of ſenſibility ſhuddered at the proſpect of that deſolating carnage which hath ſince happened, and ſpread far and wide.—It was in vain that they anticipated a kindred-ſlaughter, in which thouſands of innocent children ſhould be made fatherleſs;—helpleſs women made deſolate widows;—and families without number be reduced to leſs than a piece of bread!

The "Father of his People" could not be touched with a ſenſe of theſe things; and the profeſſed affectionate "Parent" of the Colonies could diſcover no further tokens of affection for them, than that of ſcourging them into a compliance with the arbitrary pleaſure of his will!

A treaty

A treaty for ſubmiſſion was haſtily ſent over in *military* hands, which, as the firſt ſtep, were to point the bayonet at the breaſt of America. The affair of *Lexington* ſoon ſucceeded, and opened the tragical ſcene. And the bloody engagement at *Bunker's-Hill* diſperſed every remaining hope of a future happy intercourſe with that flouriſhing continent!—The hearts of many on either ſide grew heavy at ſuch a ſeparation;—but the tears of ſympathizing affection were ſhed in vain!

In the common frailty of human nature, and the imperfection of human actions, America has doubtleſs had her ſhare;—it is not contended but that ſhe has, and has had, her *faults*; but *chaſtiſement* was not the way to mend her, even if it could have been inflicted with ſecurity to this government: Lenient meaſures only could induce her ſtronger attachment, and warmer affection.

This

This doctrine was not unknown in Parliament.

" Be to her faults a little blind.
" Be to her virtues very kind,"

was the ſalutary counſel of one of the greateſt luminaries that ever ſhined in the Engliſh Senate.

But what can be ſaid in extenuation of that determined obſtinacy, even in a K—, which to gratify reſentment and ambition could forego every thing amiable and generous, and hunt down his fellow-creatures in their own fields, with that inglorious ardour with which, in times of national diſtreſs, he would hunt down for his amuſement, the ſtags of his own foreſt?——A K—, who, being the father of a numerous family, would ſet before them a moſt glaring example of inſenſibility to the diſtreſſes of his ſ--j---s! And yet in ſpeaking to them from the Th---e, make a ſolemn profeſ-

ſion

ſion of his reliance on the *Divine Providence* for the happy ſucceſs of his meaſures!—Who but muſt ſee the unhappy tendency of ſuch conduct!—Who but muſt lament that the H--r App----t to the C---- ſhould be trained in ſuch counſels!——

The healing moderation of wiſe and judicious men was treated in the outſet with ſovereign contempt, and though the "words of truth and ſoberneſs" have not been wanting from various quarters, they have been uniformly rejected;—even the dreadful language of continual ſlaughter has produced no viſible effect beyond the general aſtoniſhment and conviction of the people, which will be ſilent through ſhame!

The meaſures of G-----m--t are a continuation of the ſame madneſs. But why will a convicted nation remain ſilent till the laſt ſtage of deſparation? Why not acknowledge their deluſion, and petition

as

as becomes them for an abſolute change of meaſures? I mean to ſay with that profeſſion of conviction, which becomes thoſe who have been deluded in common with the S-------n and the M-------y?

It was once a ſerious and too general belief, that America was to be eaſily conquered, and brought to this nation's "feet;" and the language of here and there an individual will even now go to prove that America had ſoon been conquered, had ſhe not found allies, and had our officers done their duty.

But no wiſe man ever ſuppoſed that allies would be wanting to her in ſuch a conteſt.—And with reſpect to our officers, I hope it will not be thought an idle ſuppoſition, even upon the principles of war, that the ſucceſs of armies, and the wiſdom and valour of Commanders, depend in ſome degree upon the goodneſs or badneſs of the cauſe!

Some, it is to be feared, went out at firſt, in the awful character of Commanders in Chief, more with the view of private emolument than of doing ſervice to their country.—From ſuch motives, what could be expected but a tardy and plundering conduct, and a diſgraceful return?

Another went out with a public profeſſion that he conſidered a ſoldier as a ſervant of the Crown, bound to obey the commands of his ſovereign, without taking any part in the *conſcience of the quarrel.** I am aware that in the letter of military law, a ſyſtematical foundation may be alledged for ſuch a ſentiment; but it is not on the foundation of arbitrary ſyſtem that the re[illegible]itude and honour of a great character can be ſupported. And though an earthly King may hold a fallacious ſovereignty over the conſciences of his ſubjects for a moment, TRUTH is the

* See G-----l B--g---e's ſpeech in Parliament, previous to his departure for America.

ſovereign

ſovereign power in the mind of a good man; ſuch a man can admit of no inferior controul, and will be juſtified to his country, for his MAKER will juſtify him! But in the perils of the Canadian expedition, the convention of *Saratoga*, and the crumbling of an army to nothing, enough has already been ſpoken!

The friends of this diſaſtrous war began at the above period to look ſerious, and to think that with reſpect to American courage and reſources they had been ſomewhat miſled.—But with ſmall alteration in their ſentiments of right and wrong, they continued to look forward.

There were yet ſeveral commanders, of whom, as commanders, they had reaſon to think well: And the ſuppoſed brilliancy of the battle of *Camden*, and the excurſions of Colonel Tarleton, ſerved to compenſate for preceding events, and revive their unfeeling hopes.

The affair of *Euſtatia* alſo, in addition to the capture of a few Spaniſh ſhips of war, was conſidered as an earneſt of greater ſucceſs, and more concluſive triumphs! But, alas! how awfully deluſive is that proſpect, which is founded in blood and rapine!—The vain-glory of a needy rapacious Admiral is now again tarniſhed; and another army, and a General at their head, who was looked up to as the great avenger of his country, have fallen in another *Convention!*

It muſt now be agreed on all hands, that there remains not the ſhadow of a queſtion, Whether America can ſhake off the authority of England? What an end of that wild opinion which once ran through this nation, that the ſound of authority, and the glitter of a few Engliſh arms on the American ſhore, would awe into ſubmiſſion three millions of people!

In ſuch a ſituation, where is the man that can withhold the exerciſe of his underſtanding,

derſtanding, and refrain from the language of complaint?

With ſuch a view of the times, and the tendency of public meaſures, who that is now called on to join in the national prayers, can be induced to do violence to his ſober judgment, and breathe after a further progreſs of more ſucceſsful war? For this, if not the *declared* intention of a *Faſt*, muſt be, (if any motive can be ſuppoſed) the latent motive of a Government determined to puſh forward in the ſame ruinous plan.

It may be objected, perhaps, that the public prayers to be put out for this occaſion, will be compoſed by men of a ſacred character, whoſe learning may intitle them to diſtinction, and whoſe profeſſions are piety and virtue. But is there not great reaſon to fear, that the majority of them are abettors, or (which in them is equally evil) ſilent approvers, of a ſyſtem of conduct, which, beginning with

with blood, has brought the divine diſpleaſure upon this country—and led to the preſent calamity? What proof, my ſerious countrymen, have we had to the contrary? And if *ours* are not times for men who profeſs to be miniſters of the Goſpel of Love and Peace, to ſpeak out as with a trumpet, when will they have an opportunity of ever evincing that they are not wolves in ſheep's clothing?

Piety and virtue are not abſtracted qualities of the human mind; and of them no man can have a right idea, but as he conſiders them in conjunction with actions. And every eſtimate of this kind muſt begin and end in the exerciſe of his own faculties in the fear of God.

Such an exerciſe will by no means lead him to adopt implicitly the mere *words* of men of any profeſſion, however ſanctified by titles and outward dignities; eſpecially where parade and luxury are made

to

to mingle with the profeſſed humiliations of the altar!

Humility is, beyond all controverſy, a general and indiſpenſable duty. It is a grace becoming the higheſt ſtate of proſperity in any country, and more eſpecially ſo when the Viſitation of Him who viſiteth the iniquities of wicked fathers, even on ſinful children, is apparent over a guilty land. But effectual humiliation is that of the heart, in deed and in truth; not preſcribed by the powers of wickedneſs in high places, and regulated by the titled children of diſobedience.

With ſuch ſentiments deeply engraven on their minds, I would wiſh my countrymen to meet the day of the General Faſt, as they muſt ere long meet that more ſolemn day of account, when all formal devotion will vaniſh as an empty thing, and nothing will avail but the conſciouſneſs of having fed upon the unleavened bread of ſincerity and truth. Then it will

will not be ſufficient to have joined in the preſcribed devotions of thoſe whoſe hands have been (and remain) ſtained with blood; and ſo to have offered "the ſa-"crifice of fools."

From doing this it is in every man's power to abſtain, by attending to a better and more certain principle of piety and devotion, to which the Holy Scriptures direct him, in the temple of his own mind. And the man who regards this teacher, and reverently ſeeks the knowledge and performance of his duty, *every day alike*, while he finds no need of human directors to aſſign him his office in the day of calamity, and while he could have ſmall hopes of aſſiſting them in their ſcheme of averting the juſt judgments of heaven from them, will have the moſt ſolid ground of hope, of doing all that his prayers can do, for himſelf and his unhappy country.

It is not in the mock-ſolemnity of an outward holiday, to be ſucceeded by fleets and armies, and garments rolled in the blood of unrelenting vengeance, that the ſalvation of a nation is to be ſecured.

The thirſt of conqueſt and of dominion is in itſelf repugnant to that diſpoſition which can be intitled to the divine approbation. And from ſuch motives, lurking at the bottom of the heart, motives which take their riſe from the grand agent of all abominations, what can a good man expect to ſee but judgment inſtead of deliverance? Unleſs indeed, in the eſtimation of him who knoweth the meaſure of every nation's iniquity, thoſe whom we call our *enemies* ſhould be more ripe for deſtruction than ourſelves. But this, as we are not adequate judges, and have ſmall reaſon indeed to ſuppoſe, we can no otherwiſe than impiouſly decide upon, and therefore could have no warrant to carry the engines of death againſt them.

After all, it may be objected by ſome, to whom theſe are ſerious truths, that reduced as we are to difficulties, which this country never knew before;—being encompaſſed with enemies on every ſide, What is to be done? Muſt we ſet down in inactivity and deſpondency?

To this queſtion it is an aweful difficulty, on the principles of human policy, to reply.

But if this nation has been engaged in folly and wickedneſs, and a procedure in the ſame conduct be an increaſe of that wickedneſs, there remains no alternative but to *ſuffer* or *reform*.

A day is proclaimed of ſolemn faſting, humiliation, and prayer. This, however, unhappily polluted by the ſpirit of war,—by a pre-determination to purſue thoſe meaſures which have led to the difficulties of the preſent period,—is at leaſt a tacit

a tacit acknowledgment of a Divine Providence interpoſing with, and governing the actions of men.

Such an acknowledgment, when it ariſes from the ſincere and reverent conviction of the heart, is a part of the greateſt wiſdom, and the foundation of every great and worthy ſentiment which can influence and exalt a government. It is that alone on which can ſtand the reaſonable hopes of ſecurity to any people.

Without ſuch ſentiments, it is impoſſible that a nation can be the proper object of the divine protection and deliverance; but with them, there is no deliverance, however great, which may not be hoped for.

But when a nation profeſſes to throw itſelf on the divine protection, and to intercede for the divine favour, there muſt not only be a conviction of the

judgment, that God is equal to its ſalvation; but its prayers muſt be accompanied with a ſuitable *truſt* in his goodneſs, manifeſted by a correſpondent conduct.

Whoever approaches the Divine Majeſty with right ideas of his attributes, muſt approach him not only as a being of infinite power, but as the God of *Love* and *Peace*. And if theſe be the eternal attributes of his glorious nature, it is impoſſible that with reſpect to man he can will any thing for him, but *works* of love and peace; and if theſe be required as the invariable fruits of the human mind, how impiouſly are they ſhewn forth by the weapons of *war*, and the fixed purpoſe of *revenge!*

"To that man," ſaith the Almighty, "will I look, who is of a contrite heart, "and that trembleth at my word." And if "that man," in his perſonal capacity, be the declared object of the divine regard, how much rather a nation, in the ſame diſpoſitions!

diſpoſitions! Shall ſuch an accumulated object of a gracious providence be forſaken in the day of trial? God forbid, who hath forbidden, the very idea!—Rather ſhould ſuch a nation partake of the more abundant mercies of him, *who doeth whatever he pleaſeth, in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth.*

This nation hath had ſufficient proof that *thoſe who uſe the ſword ſhall periſh by the ſword*: and that *ſalvation hath not been brought by its own arm.* It is now high time ſeriouſly to conſider what the ſure means of ſalvation are, and to purſue them with full purpoſe of heart.

It is, alas! too late to prevent that effuſion of kindred-blood, which hath ſtained the glory of the ſovereign, and brought a weight of guilt upon many of his ſubjects.—But though in a progreſs of wilful blindneſs and ambition, ſlaughter hath been permitted to be puniſhed

niſhed by ſlaughter, yet the day of awakening calamity calls aloud for the general atonement of penitential tears. A penitence which cannot be diverted by the call of human authority however high; for no authority can ſuperſede the ſovereign authority of Almighty God.

Enemies, it is certain, are ſtrong in arms againſt this apparently-devoted country; but "the race is not to the ſwift, "nor the battle to the ſtrong." And if the divine veracity itſelf be a ſufficient ground of truſt for all who can poſſibly receive deliverance, that deliverance may be found, and can only be found, in him who needeth not the uſe of the ſword, to ſhew mercy to a penitent people.

He is only requiring a national repentance, a national righteouſneſs, and a national truſt in his power, as the terms of ſalvation to this country, from all the horrors of war. And let no man think it an enthuſiaſtical belief, that the ſame Almighty

Almighty Being, who, as an earneſt of his delivering power, could ſcatter a tremendous fleet of war, in its way to expected triumph, can cauſe, at his pleaſure, *the ſword to fall from the hands of all our enemies, and the hands of war to wither!*

But the *terms* are indiſpenſable, and without them there is no real ground of hope.—Such a reformation muſt have its beginning. It hath not begun at the head; let it at leaſt begin at the feet of the nation. Let every man, however poor, enter in earneſt upon that reformation which alone can dignify every man, however rich.—Let the people firſt examine and pray for themſelves, that they may have a heart given them to pray with acceptance for the deep repentance and humiliation of the K— upon the T——, and thoſe deluded M—n—rs who are ſtill leading on the multitude to do evil.

Let the voices of all ſerious men be carried up to the Throne, imploring *that the*

ſword may be firſt withdrawn from the place of its firſt offence, and returned in righteouſneſs to the ſcabbard.

And laſtly, let this nation religiouſly reſt on the invitations and promiſes of a gracious and Almighty God:—*Let the wicked forſake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him turn unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.* Iſa. lv. 7.

4. CC 58

F I N I S.